procurement of wheat in the current Rabi Marketing Season 1997-98 is progressing smoothly. A total quantity of 47.88 lakh tonnes of wheat has been procured upto 13.5.97 as against 71.85 lakh tonnes procured during the corresponding period of last season. The ban of export of wheat and wheat products and stock holding limits will also continue in 1997-98. Government have also decided to import an additional quantity of two million tonnes of wheat during 1997-98. All these measures are expected to result in adequate level of procurement for the Central pool to meet full requirement of the Targeted PDS and also the buffer stocking norms.

Rampant sale of wheat to Businessmen in West Bengal

4510. SHRI MD. SALIM: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of Government has been drawn to a press report which appeared in The Statesman, dated 29th December, 1996, that the officers of FCI in West Bengal had been indulging in rampant sale of wheat to businessmen and thus created non-availability of wheat and atta in PDS shops in West Bengal; and

(b) if so, the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA): (a) and (b) The allocation and offtake of wheat under PDS for the State of West Bengal from October, 1996 to December, 1996 was as follows:

(IN THOUSAND TONNES)

MONTH	ALLOT-MENT	OFF TAKE
October, 1996	90	78.60
November, 1996	90	80.80
December, 1996	90	75.40

On the other hand, a quantity of only 24.92 thousand MTs and 29.30 thousand MTs, during October and November, 1996 respectively, was sold in West Bengal under Open Market Sales Schemes OMSS (D). No quantity of wheat was sold in West Bengal in the month of December, 1996 under the said Scheme. The report appearing in the press does not seem to be based on facts.

Hike in Prices of wheat, Rice and Sugar for Sale through PDS

4511. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that prices of wheat, rice and sugar meant for sale through PDS have been hiked 3 to 4 times by Government during 1996-97;

(b) if so, the details thereof item-wise/price-wise during 1995-96 and 1996-97;

(c) whether this will not affect the people who are living below the poverty line and depend more or less on foodgrains being supplied/sold through PDS; and

(d) if so, the remedial measures Government have taken so far or propose to take to mitigate the hardship being caused to the poor people?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA): (a) and (b) The Central Issue Prices of wheat and rice for PDS raised w.e.f. 1.2.1994 are still in force. Consequent upon the decision of the Central Government to streamline and restructure PDS with its focus on the poor (the Targetted PDS), the CIP (Ex-FCI godown) of wheat and rice issued from the central Pool will stand revised from 1st June, 1997, as under:—